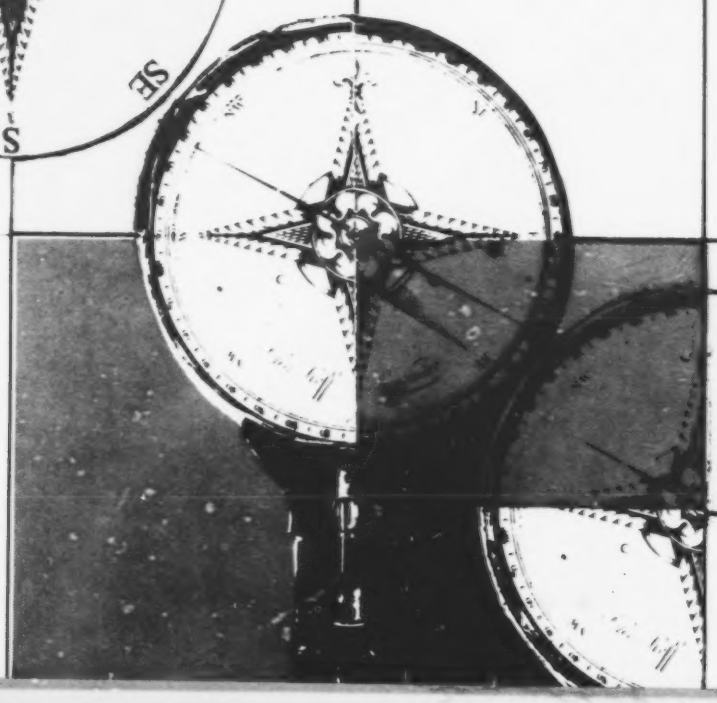
P 93

PRINCIPLES, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES: Domestic Geographic Names

US BOARD ON GEOGRAPHIC NAMES



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UNITED STATES
BOARD ON GEOGRAPHIC NAMES

PRINCIPLES, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES:

DOMESTIC GEOGRAPHIC NAMES

By Donald J. Orth, Executive Secretary, Domestic Geographic Names

Reston, Virginia
1988

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Manuel Lujan, Jr., Secretary

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BOARD ON GEOGRAPHIC NAMES
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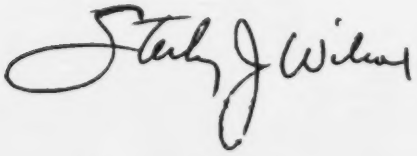
FOREWORD

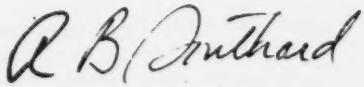
Confusion and controversy about geographic names and their applications to places and features led President Benjamin Harrison to establish the U.S. Board on Geographic Names in 1890. That early Executive Order was based on a recognition that conflicts in naming geographic features were, in fact, a serious detriment to the orderly process of exploring and settling this country. A later decision, in 1906, by President Theodore Roosevelt to extend the responsibilities of the Board to include standardization of all geographic names for Federal use was a wise and far-reaching decision that, coupled with the Harrison order, forms the foundation for the present organization of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names established in Public Law 80-242, signed by President Truman in 1947.

The existence of a body of standardized geographic names widely available on a national basis, but related strongly to local usage, makes a large contribution to savings and efficiency in the operation of government, business and industry, communications, and education. The U.S. Board on Geographic Names is at the hub of a national network of State and academic geographic names authorities who are working hard and continuously to improve that body of names by approving new names in a responsible manner and changing or correcting existing names.

The names of geographic features in the United States are a valuable reflection of the history of our country and its changing face. Names of Native American origin are found sprinkled generously across the face of the !and. Strong traces of the national languages spoken by the early explorers and settlers are visible in many sections of the country with often an accommodation in pronunciation based on local usage. Frequently, geographic naming reveals the rough and brawling nature of the environment that greeted the westward expansion. It is in these ways and many others that geographic naming gives us a clear, exciting profile of the United States that is unmatched in any other medium.



Sterling J. Wilcox
Chairman, Domestic
Names Committee, U.S.
Board on Geographic Names



Rupert B. Southard
Chairman, U.S. Board on
Geographic Names

EXECUTIVE ORDER.

As it is desirable that uniform usage in regard to geographic nomenclature and orthography obtain throughout the Executive Departments of the Government, and particularly upon the maps and charts issued by the various Departments and bureaus, I hereby constitute a Board on Geographic Names and designate the following persons, who have heretofore co-operated for a similar purpose under the authority of the several Departments, bureaus, and institutions with which they are connected, as members of said Board:

Prof. Thomas C. Mendenhall, United States Coast and Geodetic Survey, chairman.

Andrew H. Allen, Department of State.

Capt. Henry L. Howison, Light-House Board, Treasury Department.

Capt. Thomas Turtle, Engineer Corps, War Department.

Lieut. Richardson Clover, Hydrographic Office, Navy Department.

Pierson H. Bristow, Post-Office Department.

Otis T. Mason, Smithsonian Institution.

Herbert G. Ogden, United States Coast and Geodetic Survey.

Henry Gannett, United States Geological Survey.

Marcus Baker, United States Geological Survey.

To this Board shall be referred all unsettled questions concerning geographic names which arise in the Departments, and the decisions of the Board are to be accepted by these Departments as the standard authority in such matters.

Department officers are instructed to afford such assistance as may be proper to carry on the work of this Board.

The members of this Board shall serve without additional compensation, and its organization shall entail no expense on the Government.

BENJ. HARRISON.

EXECUTIVE MANSION,
September 4, 1890.

On March 18, 1890, key persons in several Federal agencies concerned about the lack of geographic names uniformity on Government maps and other publications met at the invitation of Professor Thomas Corwin Mendenhall, Superintendent of the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey. After Several meetings during which procedures and principles of name standardization were formulated, it was realized that the program would be more effective with broader support. The issue was taken to President Benjamin Harrison who agreed with the objectives of the Board. On September 4, 1890, he issued an Executive Order officially establishing the United States Board on Geographic Names.

**Benjamin Harrison (1833-1901)
Twenty-third President of the
United States (1889-1893)**

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

It would be ideal if in everyday language all people were to use but one name for a given geographic entity and only one entity would be known by that name. In practice, the extent to which either complete distinctiveness is approachable or something less can be tolerated varies with time according to socio-political conditions, the mobility of people and their naming habits, and language flexibility. Standardization of the written form of a name and its application has become increasingly important during the last 100 years because of reference needs associated with the development of natural sciences; sophisticated transportation and communication systems; special land, mineral, and water rights; and highly accurate large-scale maps and charts. Confusion, uncertainty, and misunderstanding may occur when the name for an entity is spelled in different ways, when different names are used for the same place, when the same name is used for different places, or when a name is applied to a feature in an unexpected or different way from the general understanding of how it should apply.

U.S. BOARD ON GEOGRAPHIC NAMES

The systematic standardization of geographic names in the United States began late in the 19th century. After theAmerican Civil War there was a surge of mapping and scientific reports associated with the exploration, mining, and settlement of the western territories. The accuracy of the large number of names, their spellings, and applications became a serious problem to mapmakers and scientists who required uniform, nonconflicting geographical nomenclature. As a result, President Benjamin Harrison signed an Executive Order on September 4, 1890, establishing the United States Board on Geographic Names. The Board was given authority to resolve all unsettled questions concerning geographical names. Decisions of the Board were accepted as binding by all departments and agencies of the Federal Government.

In 1906 President Theodore Roosevelt extended the responsibilities of the Board. No longer did it only adjudicate conflicts, but it now had authority to standardize all geographic names for Federal use including name changes and new names. The current period in the Board's history began in 1947 when the Congress of the United States reorganized the Board by Public Law 80-242 (see Appendix A). The Board on Geographic Names, conjointly with the Secretary of the Interior, is directed to establish and maintain uniform geographic-name usage throughout the Federal Government. The present Board operates without a budget and is made up of members and deputies from Federal departments and independent agencies, providing a broad spectrum of representation from most Federal programs concerned with the use of geographical names. All members of the Board and their deputies are employees of the Federal Government, and they serve without further compensation. Members and deputies are appointed by the heads of their respective

departments or agencies for a 2-year term. The Chairman is appointed by the Secretary of the Interior on nomination by the Board. The officers of the Board are its Chairman, Vice Chairman, and its executive secretaries. The Chairman appoints as Executive Secretary to the Board either the Executive Secretary for Domestic Names or the Executive Secretary for Foreign Names.

Special working committees are established by the Board when necessary, and the Secretary of the Interior, upon recommendation of the Board, may establish advisory committees of recognized experts in their respective fields to assist in the solution or treatment of special problems. Current working committees include the Domestic Names Committee, Foreign Names Committee, Executive Committee, Publications Committee, and advisory committees on names of Native American origin and Antarctic and undersea feature names.

Since 1947, domestic names standardization has been carried out in the name of the Board by its Domestic Names Committee, which meets monthly. Consisting of members and deputies representing the Departments of Interior, Commerce, and Agriculture and the Government Printing Office, Postal Service, and Library of Congress, it is responsible for standardizing the names of places, features, and areas within the 50 States and in other areas under the sovereignty of the United States. The Executive Secretary and staff support for the domestic names activities of the Board are provided by the U.S. Geological Survey, an agency in the Department of the Interior.

From the beginning, in 1890, the Board developed principles of domestic names standardization that have stood the test of time. A primary principle is formal recognition of present-day local usage. To this end, the Committee and its supporting staff work closely with State geographic names authorities, State and local governments, and the general public in order to determine the choice, spelling, written form, and application of each name for official use. A list of State names authorities can be found in *Authorities and Organizations Involved with Geographic Names - 1989* published by the U.S. Geological Survey in cooperation with the Board on Geographic Names. See Appendix B for a list of terms and their definitions used by the Board in its standardization program.

Members of the Board and of its staff also have represented the United States in various international programs to standardize names. Appendix D gives a brief history of international programs, including those of the United Nations.

Foreign names standardization is carried out in the name of the Board by its Foreign Names Committee. The Committee's members and deputies represent those Federal departments and independent agencies concerned with the use of foreign geographic names. The Executive Secretary and staff support for the foreign names activities of the Board, and the maintenance of records relating to undersea feature names and names in Antarctica are provided by the Defense Mapping Agency, an agency in the Department of Defense (see: Appendix C).

NATURE OF DOMESTIC GEOGRAPHIC NAMES

Geographic names normally originate in and are influenced by spoken language. It is important to remember this fact because many people are mostly concerned with written forms of names, including matters of spelling, capitalization, word form, and writing marks that have little or nothing to do with the way names are spoken.

Most geographic names are binomial in that they have two parts, denoting the specific and the generic: Middleton (middle town), Coal Hollow, or Sierra Nevada. The generic part tells the kind of place, feature, or area the name refers to, and the specific part uniquely identifies the particular place, feature, or area. The generic part of the name is usually a single topographic term such as brook, hill, bay, peak, mesa, or lake; the specific part may consist of one or more words such as Grosse Roche, Jenny Lind Run, and Casale Campo di Carne. The binomial (two-part) form is strong, and in written usage often leads to combining words in the specific part of the name, such as Threemile Run and Redhill Gulch. The names of some features can be long, especially if the specific part is a prepositional phrase: Cliffs of the Seven Double Pillars, Foot of the Mountains Run, and Canon del Rajadero de los Negros.

Some names have nonce (unique) generic forms; consider, for example, colorful American names like Bald Alley (ridge), Butlers Toothpick (pinnacle rock), Titans Piazza (hill), and Devils Racepath (ridge). Variations of the binomial form are one-word names that require a capitalized article: The Bend, La Pica, The Cape, The Nose, and The Maze.

Single-word specific names like Boston, Oalite, and Pinhook are common for populated places and some civil divisions; the kind of feature meant is implied by sentence context.

Several names with the same generic word may be treated as a group in text with the generic word in plural form: "Calumet, Manitowoc, and Sheboygan Counties;" "Wisconsin and Illinois Rivers."

THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC NAMES DATA BASE

The National Geographic Names Data Base is a part of the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) and represents the primary source for identifying official names. The system is maintained by the U.S. Geological Survey in cooperation with the U.S. Board on Geographic Names. Over 2.5 million name records are currently in the data base. These records include the names of natural features, populated places, civil divisions, areas and regions, and cultural features such as mines, churches, schools, cemeteries, hospitals, dams, airports, and shopping centers. Official names are appropriately identified in the data base, which also includes records of named features not under the purview of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names (See Appendix B for definition of "official name"). Information associated with each record includes the:

- written form of the official or primary name

- term identifying the kind of feature
- location and, in some cases, extent of the feature by geographical coordinates
- Geological Survey or other official base series map on which the feature can be located
- elevation of the feature when appropriate
- official or nonofficial status of the name (not all names in the data base are official)
- variant names and spellings for the same feature

Information in the data base can be retrieved, analyzed, and organized to meet general and specialized needs. Information about access to the National Geographic Names Data Base and available products may be obtained from the:

Manager, GNIS
U.S. Geological Survey
523 National Center
Reston, Virginia 22092
Tel.: (703) 648-4544 (FTS 959-4544)

DETERMINING OFFICIAL NAMES

It is the policy of the Federal Government that only official domestic geographic names are to be used on Federal maps and in other publications. An official name is one in which the written form of that name and its application to the appropriate place, feature, or area are approved by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names (see Appendix B). The primary reference for official names and their applications is the Geographic Names Information System. Names not in GNIS or which are not identified as official in GNIS must be submitted to the Board for approval before they can be used for Federal publication.

This procedure does not apply to the names of offices or establishments of governmental agencies; the names of certain manmade features such as streets, roads, shopping centers, churches, schools, hospitals, and airports (see: Principle IV); and those names used for historical reference or other similar situations in which the geographic names are not intended to represent current official usage.

The GNIS is available on-line to Federal agencies and up-to-date name information is also available by requesting current computer printouts and magnetic tape. Special searches for names in specific areas or for specific kinds of features are performed upon request.

Secondary sources that can be used for determining official geographic names are:

- The National Gazetteer of the United States of America

- The base series maps and charts published by the U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Forest Service, and the National Ocean Service.

Except for a few relatively recent changes and additions, the published volumes of "The National Gazetteer of the United States of America" are an important source of official name information. The National Gazetteer is a series of State, territory, and other special listings of geographic names generated by the GNIS and published in U.S. Geological Survey Professional Paper series 1200.

The base series maps are:

1. Quadrangle maps of the National Topographic Map Series published by the U.S. Geological Survey

2. Nautical charts of coastal areas and inland waters published by the National Ocean Service

3. Administrative and recreation maps published by the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture

4. Sectional aeronautical charts published by the National Ocean Service

These maps are periodically reprinted or revised, at which time the names and their applications are brought up to date in accordance with information in the GNIS data base.

Any conflicts noted in name usage among maps in the base series or between one of these maps and the data base, should be brought to the attention of the Executive Secretary, Domestic Geographic Names, U.S. Board on Geographic Names, U.S. Geological Survey, Mail Stop 523, Reston, Virginia 22092.

DOMESTIC NAMES DECISIONS

Shortly after its organization by Public Law in 1947, the U.S. Board on Geographic Names created a Domestic Names Committee and a Foreign Names Committee. It delegated to each authority to render decisions on individual geographic names in the name of the Board, within their respective spheres of interest and within established principles, policies, and procedures. Therefore, decisions of either committee are decisions of the Board and become official after review and approval by the Secretary of the Interior. New policies, principles, and procedures and major name cases, or changes to any of these, however, are normally taken to the full Board membership for review and approval before being submitted to the Secretary of the Interior.

Domestic geographic name problems and proposals submitted to the Board are researched individually by the Geological Survey support staff for the Domestic Names Committee for all factors that may affect the decision process and are put on a monthly docket list. The Domestic Names Committee has identified several factors to be considered, along with its principles, policies, and procedures, when deciding on name problems and proposals. These factors and their definitions are:

Established Usage

A geographic name that has appeared consistently in written usage and/or has been expressed consistently in verbal usage, and that is supported by historical and/or current written materials and/or in folklore.

Historical Usage

A geographic name given and used during the early history of a place or feature; the name may be either obsolete or in current use.

Legal Usage

A geographic name that appears in a document generated as part of a legal procedure established by a government body; the document may either (1) establish the name, or (2) apply it incidentally in order to identify or locate an area, site, or feature important to the principal purpose of the document. This category includes "legislated usage," which, because of its importance to the naming process, is given special recognition.

Legislated Usage

A geographic name established by a legislative body--local, State, or Federal.

Local Usage

A geographic name commonly and currently used for an entity, whether in verbal and/or written form, by persons having frequent enough contact with the entity to use the name on a regular basis.

Unnamed Feature

A geographic entity that is not known to have had a verbal or written name.

Verbal Usage

A name used by people when referring to a place, feature, or area in their own language as commonly spoken every day.

Written Usage

A geographic name in handwritten or printed form; for example, handwritten letters, diaries, and logs or names printed in newspapers or on maps.

Each docket list is sent to cooperating Federal and State agencies and to interested organizations and individuals about a month before the Domestic Names Committee meeting at which the list is to be considered. Reviewing the merits of each case, the Committee decides between conflicting names and approves or disapproves proposed names for unnamed features and name changes. Each decision is guided by existing principles and policies, and factors involving established, historical, legal, legislated, written, and verbal usage (see section on Definitions). Some actions are temporarily deferred to allow more time for State and local response or to get more information useful for making a decision. A record of the decisions at each monthly meeting is submitted to the Secretary of the Interior for review and concurrence.

Name decisions of the Domestic Names Committee are decisions of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names and are entered in the National Geographic Names Data Base and published in a quarterly decision list.

SPELLING OF GEOGRAPHIC NAMES

The Board's decisions establish standard spellings of geographic names for use by the Federal Government. When determining the spelling of names in the United States, the Board recognizes that geographic names, like other proper names, are not necessarily subject to the spelling rules that apply to other words in the English language. Although these standard spellings generally conform to rules of English, they may reflect historical spellings or forms commonly used or preferred by local citizens and may therefore include what often appear to be grammatically incorrect, misspelled, improperly combined, or clipped words.

Chapter 2

DOMESTIC GEOGRAPHIC NAMES PRINCIPLES

INTRODUCTION

Public Law 80-242 (1947) instructs the United States Board on Geographic Names, subject to the approval of the Secretary of the Interior, to formulate principles, policies, and procedures with reference to both domestic and foreign geographic names; and to decide the standard names, their orthography, and applications for official use. The following five domestic geographic names principles reflect the underlying philosophy and primary guidelines used in national standardization since 1890. The Committee and the Board are guided by these principles when establishing policies and procedures and making decisions on domestic names.

Principle I:

Use of the Roman Alphabet--Official domestic geographic names are written in the Roman alphabet as normally used for writing the English language. Diacritical marks, however, may be added to names based on the Spanish and French languages (see: Policy VII: The Use of Diacritical Marks). Names from other non-English languages that use a modified Roman alphabet may be placed in parentheses after the official form of the name.

Principle II:

Names in Local Usage--The underlying principle of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names for establishing official geographic names and their applications is recognition of present-day local usage or preferences when possible. Exceptions occur when local spoken or written usage is in conflict with specific Board policy. Precedence is usually given to the preferences of State or local government authorities which may disagree with local usage. In other cases where local usage is conflicting or weak, well-established documented names and names with historical significance are given strong consideration.

Principle III:

Names Established by Act of Congress--Geographic names and their applications specifically established by an act of Congress are official by law. This does not apply to geographic names used incidentally in language of an act of Congress intended for other purposes, unless the language clearly indicates that naming is part of the intent of the act.

Principle IV:

Names Established by Other Authorities--The U.S. Board on Geographic Names normally accepts as official the names of political subdivisions, bounded areas of administration, structures, and establishments in the United States and its territories, as determined by the appropriate responsible public or private authorities (see Sec. 7 of Public Law 80-242: Appendix A).

Principle V: One Name for One Geographic Entity--The U.S. Board on Geographic Names identifies one name, spelling, and application as official for a geographic entity in the United States, its territories, and outlying areas. For certain entities a shortened version of the official name also may be authorized for use in Federal publications (example: State of Wisconsin and Wisconsin; City of New York and New York City).

Chapter 3

DOMESTIC GEOGRAPHIC NAMES POLICIES

For uniformity in the decisionmaking process and to assist in national standardization, the U.S. Board on Geographic Names has formulated policies and procedures that deal with particular naming problems or issues.

POLICY I:

NAMES BEING CONSIDERED BY CONGRESS

Geographic names and their applications specifically established by an act of Congress are official by law and take precedence over decisions of the Board. Occasionally a name or name-change proposal submitted to the Board becomes at the same time a matter of proposed legislation before the Congress of the United States. To prevent name confusion by possible conflicting action by the bodies and to save time and effort, the Board will adhere to the following policy:

Policy

The U.S. Board on Geographic Names will not render a decision on a name or its application if the matter is also being considered by the Congress of the United States. If Congress does not act on the proposed legislation by the end of its second session, the Board will not act on the case for 90 days after the beginning of the next session of Congress. If Congress formally declines to act on proposed naming legislation, the Board will wait 90 days before deciding on the case, unless new legislation is introduced during that period.

Approved by:
Board on Geographic Names
March 12, 1981

Approved by:
Secretary of the Interior
April 20, 1981

POLICY II:

NAME CHANGES

Geographic names, like other categories of proper names, perform an important reference or label function in language. Each name identifies a particular geographic feature, place, or area. This function requires a high degree of stability in the spoken and written forms of names and their applications. The U.S. Board on Geographic Names will consider every proposal involving a name change on an individual basis, and the merits of each case will be carefully evaluated.

Definition

The expression "name change" is defined here as formally changing the proper name of a place, feature, or area in the United States or its territories and outlying areas presently recognized by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names as official for use on Federal maps and in other Federal publications. The Board recognizes three classes of name changes:

a. Those made to bring Federal official usage into agreement with well-established local usage.

b. Those made to eliminate particular name problems as in cases involving derogatory names and name duplication.

c. Those made at the request of persons or organizations, public or private, for commemorative or other reasons important to the proposer.

Policy sec. 1

General: The U.S. Board on Geographic Names does not encourage changes in official geographic names. It will not initiate changes in domestic geographic names except in rare cases such as those involving certain derogatory names and name duplication. All name-change proposals are evaluated in cooperation with State geographic-name authorities, Federal and State agencies, local governments, other authoritative bodies, and the public.

sec. 2

Conforming to Local Usage: It is the policy of the Board to follow present-day local usage whenever possible. The Board will consider proposals to change official names that do not agree with well-established local usage or their applications. However, considerations other than local usage may be over-riding in certain individual cases. Factors such as Board policies, feature importance, document usage, population density, and State and local governmental needs are always considered in Board decisions.

sec. 3

Derogatory Names: The Board has a firm policy prohibiting the use of a word in an official geographic name considered by the Board to be derogatory to any racial, ethnic, or religious group (see Policy VI: Derogatory Names).

sec. 4

Duplicate Names: Common names are often applied over and over again in the naming process. Where duplication leads to confusion, the Board encourages requests to change names in order to eliminate duplication (see Policy VII: Name Duplication).

Approved by:
Board on Geographic Names
March 12, 1981

Approved by:
Secretary of the Interior
April 20, 1981

POLICY III:

COMMEMORATIVE NAMES

Human impact on the land has taken many forms. One of the more prominent forms has been the association of people's names with the landscape. This has resulted in the adoption of many personal names and nicknames for identifying geographic features, such as populated places (Harrisburg, Pittsburgh, Washington, Elizabeth); mountains (Pikes Peak, Mount Saint Helens, Lone Eagle Peak); and streams (Hudson River, Guthrie Run, Barnes Creek, Parkers Creek).

Policy sec. 1

The U.S. Board on Geographic Names will consider proposals for assignment of the names or nicknames of deceased persons to geographic features in the United States and its territories. The Board will not

consider names that commemorate or may be construed to commemorate living persons. In addition, a person must have been deceased for at least one year before a commemorative proposal will be considered.

sec. 2 — The person being honored by the naming should have had either some direct association with the feature or have made a significant contribution to the area or State in which it is located.

sec. 3 — A proposal commemorating an individual with an outstanding national or international reputation will be considered even if the person was not directly associated with the geographic feature.

Guidelines

A person's death on or at a feature, such as in a mountaineering accident or plane crash, or the mere ownership of land or the feature, does not normally meet the "direct association" criterion.

A proposal to commemorate an individual should contain evidence of local support for the proposed name and its application. Such evidence may be in the form of letters from local residents and administrative agency personnel and/or petitions containing original signatures of local citizens.

Approved by:
Board on Geographic Names
April 22, 1986

Approved by:
Secretary of the Interior
May 27, 1986

POLICY IV:

WILDERNESS AREAS

In the Wilderness Act of 1964 (Public Law 88-577, 78 Stat. 890) Congress established a National Wilderness Preservation System composed of federally owned areas to be administered

> "...for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness, and so as to provide for the protection of these areas, the preservation of their wilderness character, and for the gathering and dissemination of information regarding their use and enjoyment as wilderness...".

The act characterizes wilderness "as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man [and] where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."

Though wilderness designations are a modern invention, a fundamental characteristic of elemental wilderness is that features are nameless and the cultural overlay of civilization is absent. No wilderness is today totally free of place names and cultural artifacts, but a goal of Federal wilderness area administration is to minimize the impacts and traces of people. Wilderness areas designated by the Congress are managed to preserve their unique natural, scenic, educational, scientific, and primitive values.

Policy sec. 1 **The U.S. Board on Geographic Names will not approve new names within wilderness areas unless an overriding need exists, such as for purposes of safety, education, or area administration.**

sec. 2 **Name proposals commemorating persons are discouraged and will not be adopted unless there is a direct association between the person being honored and the feature.**

sec. 3 **All new name proposals involving wilderness areas must meet the same basic criteria required of any other name proposal. These policies also apply to areas being considered for possible designation by Congress as wilderness areas.**

Guidelines

The administering Federal agency will review new name proposals and advise the U.S. Board on Geographic Names of its findings relative to overriding need. Final approval or disapproval will be made by the Board.

Persons wishing to name an unnamed feature in a wilderness area should coordinate their proposal with the Federal agency responsible for the administration of the area.

Approved by:
Board on Geographic Names
April 16, 1985

Approved by:
Secretary of the Interior
June 21, 1985

POLICY V:

SCIENTIFIC NAMING NEEDS

Earth-science studies are at times hampered by the lack of geographic names needed to provide convenient general reference for the study area and its prominent features. However, scientific needs for geographic names may conflict with U.S. Board on Geographic Names policies, particularly its wilderness area policy which restricts naming of geographic features in existing or planned wilderness areas. The Board also looks with disfavor on the mass naming of an area's geographic features by any individual. In order to observe the Board's policies and, at the same time, permit scientists to carry out their investigative responsibilities efficiently, the following policy is adopted.

Policy

The U.S. Board on Geographic Names will consider name proposals for unnamed features in areas where needed to expedite scientific investigations. Scientists may submit name proposals for the minimum number of geographic entities needed for their studies and descriptions of the natural resources in areas under investigation. Each proposal must contain an adequate justification for the selection of the particular entity and of the appropriateness of the proposed name. Proposals honoring persons should be avoided.

Guidelines

Name proposals for scientific studies are to follow standard BGN guidelines for proposing geographic names.

Names should be submitted well in advance of publication deadlines to allow the Board time to follow normal review and decision procedures.

Names approved are to be flagged in the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) to indicate they were approved for a scientific study. Their use on official base series maps is at the discretion of the mapping agency; however, use of flagged names on maps covering a National Forest, National Park, or a designated or planned wilderness area should be coordinated with the Federal agency responsible for the administration of the area.

Approved by:
Board on Geographic Names
November 24, 1986

Approved by:
Secretary of the Interior
December 22, 1986

POLICY VI:

DEROGATORY NAMES

The guiding principle of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names for the names of places, features, and areas in the United States and its territories is to adopt for official Federal use the names found in present-day local usage. An exception to this principle occurs when a name is considered by a large number of people to be highly offensive or derogatory to a particular racially ethnic or religious group. In such instances the Board does not approve use of the names for Federal maps and other publications.

The Board, however, is conservative in this matter and prefers to interfere as little as possible with the use of names in everyday language because attitudes and perceptions of words considered to be pejorative vary between individuals and can change connotation from one generation to another. Geographic names are part of the historical record of the United States, and that record may be either distorted or disrupted by the elimination of names associated with particular groups of Americans. Such unwarranted action by the Board could, in time, be a disservice to the people the process is meant to protect.

Policy

In the case of domestic geographic names, the U.S. Board on Geographic Names will not adopt a (locally used) name for Federal usage that is derogatory to a particular racially ethnic group or religion.

Guidelines

Any individual or agency may request the Board to change a currently used name on grounds the name is derogatory or patently offensive. Requests for name changes should be in the form of an application to the Board including reasons why the present name should not be used. The requester may offer an alternate name as part of the application following Board guidelines for submittal of name proposals.

Upon receipt of a request to change a derogatory name, the Board will investigate the background for the current name and will solicit from the appropriate State names authority that organization's views on the proposed change, including any alternatives.

This procedure also will be followed for derogatory names encountered during any review of locally used names by the staff of the Board.

In considering a change proposal the Board will give careful consideration to all relevant factors including the extent and

distribution of usage, historical context, user perceptions and intent, and lexical meanings.

The Board will not adopt a name proposal that includes the word "Jap" or the word "Nigger" whether or not it is in current local usage and regardless of by whom proposed.

In the event of a name change, the prior form will appear in the permanent record as a variant.

In the event a decision is made to change a name held derogatory for which no alternate name is proposed and for which there is no alternate in current local usage, the Board will solicit alternate name(s) from the appropriate State naming authority. If none is received, use of the current name will be discontinued without substitution of an alternate.

Approved by:
Board on Geographic Names
June 23, 1983

Approved by:
Secretary of the Interior
July 28, 1983

POLICY VII:

USE OF DIACRITICAL MARKS

The U.S. Board on Geographic Names has not customarily recognized accent or other diacritical marks as part of the spelling of geographic names in the United States (see: Principle I). Such marks are almost never used in English, but they constitute part of the spelling in many other languages, including Spanish and French from which numerous place names in the United States are derived. Most geographic names adopted from these languages have been assimilated into English usage, and therefore lack the diacritical marks that were included in the original spelling. In some cases, however, especially in the areas of the United States where Spanish or French are still spoken, there are names for which active local usage may indicate that diacritical marks should be included. Diacriticals may be especially important if their omission would result in a significant change in the meaning of the name in the parent language.

In the past, the Board has sanctioned the use of a name form containing diacritical marks in a few exceptional cases, generally on the basis that such marks were retained in active local usage.

Policy

The presence of diacritical marks will not necessarily bar approval of a geographic name by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names; each such name will be considered on a case-by-case basis. A spelling that includes diacritical marks will be approved if, in the judgment of the Board, there is substantial evidence of active local use, such as official records, maps, and signs, in the area where the feature is located.

The Board on Geographic Names does not approve, for Federal publications, the use of writing marks in the written forms of geographic names derived from the Hawaiian and Native American languages.

Names using special marks not normally found in the English language are considered variant names (see: Principle I).

Approved by:
Board on Geographic Names
April 22, 1986

Approved by:
Secretary of the Interior
May 27, 1986

POLICY VIII:

NAME DUPLICATION

The role of geographic names in language is to provide unambiguous labels to identify geographical entities in the world around us. Duplication of names within an area in which there is need to refer to particular places and features often causes confusion and misunderstanding. Name duplication, however, is common within a county, State, or nation because naming is a natural and uncontrolled process. While name duplication within a county or State is generally objectionable, well-established geographic names should not normally be changed unless there is strong public support for the change.

Definition

Name duplication occurs when two or more places or features of the same kind, relatively close to each other, have the same name in local or published usage. Name duplication does not occur when places or features of different kinds have the same name, such as a stream called Long Creek and a village called Longcreek or Long Creek.

Policy sec. 1

Names proposed for unnamed geographic features that duplicate another name in the State or nearby in an adjoining State will not normally be approved by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names.

sec. 2

The Board encourages efforts by State and local governments and local citizens to change or modify one or more duplicate names wherever ambiguity is likely to occur. Such name changes should be coordinated with the Board.

sec. 3

The Board will not normally initiate name changes to eliminate duplication. When there is a need to eliminate duplication in Federal publications to prevent confusion, the Board may add a modifier such as East, North, South, West, Big, Little, Upper, Lower, or Middle to one or more of the duplicate names. This practice will be coordinated with the State geographic names authorities. In States that do not have an authority, effort will be made to work with the appropriate local government and citizens in promoting an interest in eliminating the duplication. A name submitted as an alternative to a duplicate name should conform to the policy for naming an unnamed feature (see Policy II: Name Changes).

Approved by:
Board on Geographic Names
March 12, 1981

Approved by:
Secretary of the Interior
April 20, 1981

POLICY IX:

USE OF VARIANT GEOGRAPHIC NAMES

The U.S. Board on Geographic Names was established to bring uniformity to name usage on Federal maps and in Federal documents. From its inception the Board had identified a single official spelling for each domestic geographic entity. For certain names of rivers and political subdivisions, both a long form and a short form are identified and either may be used (for example, City of Chicago or Chicago).

A variant is any name for a geographic entity other than its official name. Known variant names and applications are specified in Board decisions. The Board disapproves the independent use of any variant, but a variant may be given in parentheses following the approved name.

Policy sec. 1

In adopting a domestic geographic name, the U.S. Board on Geographic Names will identify one name, spelling, and application as official for a geographic entity. For names of political and civil divisions, either a long form or a short form may be used.

sec. 2

The Board does not allow the use of parentheses in an official name, but a variant in parentheses may be used after the official name if needed for purposes of clarity or reference. The independent use of any name other than the official name is not approved.

Guidelines

Use of a variant name in parentheses following an official name on a Federal map or in a report is at the discretion of the author and the issuing agency.

On a map, a name in parentheses may appear either following the official name or below it. It should always be clear which name is the official one. Names using special symbols to indicate glottal stops and stress, such as those derived from the Hawaiian language, are considered variant names and each may be used in parentheses after the official name on maps or in text. The Board does not object to the listing of such variant names in a tabular or dictionary format in order to convey special information such as pronunciation, name origin, or word meaning. A statement explaining the purpose of the table or dictionary and why the names listed vary from official names, can be made.

A national system of scenic, historic, and recreation trails was authorized by Public Law 90-543 on October 2, 1968 (amended November 10, 1978). These national trails may coincide in part with trails having well-established names that differ from the official names fixed by legislation. When this occurs, and there is a need to retain the older established name for reference or identification, it is recommended that the older name be shown in parentheses after the official name. Example: "Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (John Muir Trail)."

Possible reasons for use of variant names include:

a. To show an alternative name in current or recent local use.

b. To show a former name that has been changed.

c. To show a foreign name for a feature crossing an international boundary.

d. To show a local name that applies only to part of a feature.

Approved by:
Board on Geographic Names
February 9, 1984

Approved by:
Secretary of the Interior
March 23, 1984

POLICY X:

LONG NAMES

Practically since its inception the U.S. Board on Geographic Names has expressed a preference against long and clumsily constructed domestic geographic names. Although the Board does not specifically define what constitutes an unacceptably long name, if the length of a name is such that it is difficult or cumbersome to use in written or spoken form, then such a name generally will not be approved by the Board.

This statement deals with three specific categories of long names, as follows:

a. Legislated names for reservoirs, dams, and other features, assigned to commemorate some individual and typically using his/her full name. These are termed "legislated feature names." Examples include Richard B. Russell Dam and Lake (Georgia) and Bob Marshall Wilderness Area (Montana). If such names are assigned by an act of Congress, they are not subject to modification by the Board on Geographic Names.

b. Names adopted to commemorate an individual, using more than the surname so as to make the referent person unmistakable. These names are distinguishable from Category 1 because their motive is to avoid ambiguity. They are termed "full commemorative names." Examples include Walter E. Long Lake (Texas), Claude Birdseye Point (Arizona), and George R. Stewart Peak (California).

c. Names of stream forks or branches that might be regarded as incomplete without including the names of their main streams. These are termed "long stream names."

Policy **sec. 1** **For names of domestic geographic features established by a legislative body other than Congress, the Board on Geographic Names will follow its general policy relative to the use of personal names. Under that policy, the full name of a person as the specific part of a geographic name normally is not approved.**

sec. 2 **This policy also applies to proposals to use an individual's full name to emphasize the commemorative intent of the name. Exceptions are occasionally made by the Board when a person's full name, or parts of a full name, are short and euphonious or where the surname used alone would be ambiguous.**

sec. 3

Names of tributaries will be approved by the Board as the official names without reference to their parent stream, provided they are unambiguous and meet the Board's other guidelines for approving a name. If a tributary name is deemed to be ambiguous without the name of its parent stream, the Board will consider (1) extending the name of the parent stream to the tributary, or (2) requesting an alternative proposal. If neither of these alternatives is possible, the Board will consider including the name of the parent stream in the approved name of the tributary.

Guidelines

In reviewing legislated geographic-feature names, the Board will consider adopting the full legislated names with selective underscoring to specify the surname portion (for example, John H. McClintick Dam).

Proposals for adoption of a full commemorative name are considered individually as part of the overall review of the appropriateness of the name. If the full name is approved to avoid ambiguity, selective underscoring will not be adopted to permit use of the surname portion of the name alone.

If a stream name is approved that includes the name of the parent stream, only the full approved name may be used, not a shortened form that omits the parent stream name.

Approved by:
Board on Geographic Names
April 22, 1986

Approved by:
Secretary of the Interior
May 27, 1986

POLICY XI

NATIVE AMERICAN PLACENAMES

Note: The geographic names of the Native Americans are an important and integral part of the cultural heritage of the United States. Although the Board on Geographic Names has always supported the use of names derived from the Indian, Inuit (Eskimo), and Polynesian languages, specific guidelines regarding the use of these names were never formulated. The Board is currently reviewing draft policy and guidelines for the treatment of Native American placenames which will be published in the next edition of these Principles, Policies, and Procedures. Information concerning the status of this effort may be had by writing to the Executive Secretary for Domestic Geographic Names (see page 5 for address).

Chapter 4

SPECIAL PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

SUBMITTING NAME CORRECTIONS AND CHANGES

The National Geographic Names Data Base within the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) contains the geographic names approved for use on Federal maps and other publications (includes tapes and other data bases). A correction or change to an official geographic name record in the data base can be initiated by submitting the appropriate information to the Executive Secretary for Domestic Names, U.S. Board on Geographic Names. Such corrections or changes are generally based on discovered typographical errors or evidence that local or predominant published/legal usage is in conflict with the official record. Proposed changes must be submitted to the Board for review and approval before they can be used in Federal publications.

The Board's procedure for reviewing name conflicts includes submitting the cases to local Federal and State agencies, and where the conflict relates to a major geographic feature, it also includes publicizing it in the news media. This procedure alerts the agencies and the general public to the problem and solicits their comments and recommendations. Where a name conflict is associated with a feature on an international boundary with Canada or Mexico, the review procedure involves contact with appropriate Canadian or Mexican names authorities for their comments.

The key factor in the publication-name approval process is to submit the requested correction or change to the Board well in advance of publication date in order to allow adequate time for the correction or approval process. This lead time can vary between 1 to 6 or more months depending on the nature of the submittal. Typographical corrections, for example, can be made by the Board's support staff in a few days while some controversial changes may take several months.

Upon request, in emergency cases, the Board and its staff will attempt to expedite the review and approval process. If, however, approval is not received before a publication deadline, the name or names involved should be used as indicated in the data base or left off the publication.

SUBMITTING NONRECORDED NAMES

A nonrecorded name is one that is not currently in the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS). It is a name recently collected and represented as being in local usage or in established publication or legal use.

All such names are to be submitted to the Board on Geographic Names for review and approval before they may be used in Federal publications. These names generally will not be docketed and will be processed,

approved, or rejected, in less than 30 calendar days. The person or agency submitting the names will be notified immediately of the actions taken.

METHOD OF SUBMITTING CORRECTIONS, CHANGES, AND NON-RECORDED NAMES

Proposals to change an official name, its spelling, or application can be made by submitting appropriate information to the Executive Secretary for Domestic Names, U.S. Board on Geographic Names. This can be done by letter, by using the standard controversial-name report form or by established telecommunication or other procedures using an IBM personal computer or compatible equipment. All proposals should clearly identify the feature and include required evidence supporting the proposal. If the communication is by letter or report form, feature identification can be done by map annotation. Other procedures require identification by means of accurate geographical coordinates. The Board's decision may differ in name, choice, form, spelling, or application from that recommended by the proposing agency or individual. However, all Federal agencies are required to accept the Board's decision and to correct their maps and reports accordingly before publication, or, if already published, at the time the map or maps are next reprinted.

Nonrecorded names and obvious typographical errors may be submitted by telecommunication methods or by annotated map or maps. Here again, clear identification of the feature is important. The information submitted or annotated on a map should indicate the source of the name (i.e. "local usage--8 people:" "Sierra Club Climbing Guide, 1985") or the nature of the typographical error.

PROPOSING NAMES FOR UNNAMED DOMESTIC FEATURES

Although the principal guide for determining domestic standard names is present-day spoken and written local usage, the Board realizes that there are occasional needs to give names to features that are presently unnamed for reference or commemorative purposes. The U.S. Board on Geographic Names does not initiate naming of unnamed domestic features, but is authorized to consider new-name proposals for use with Federal maps and publications, and for other uses. Any person or organization, public or private, may submit a name proposal to the Board for consideration.

A new name will affect many people for a long time, thus it must be acceptable to local citizens, involved local, State, and Federal agencies, and other users. The Board's responsibility is to evaluate each name proposal as to appropriateness, acceptability, and need (relative to the feature, its location, and the user community) before it is adopted. This is done in cooperation with State geographic-name committees, Federal and State agencies, local governments, and the general public. As a general policy, the U.S. Board on Geographic Names avoids excessive or needless naming of features.

Guidelines for Proposing Names

These guidelines apply only to features that have never been named. Names for features already established in spoken or written form by local citizens, even though the names do not appear on current maps, are given priority (see Policy II: Name Changes). A person who wishes to

propose a name for an unnamed feature is expected to determine, to the best of his or her ability, whether the feature is actually unnamed. The best sources for locating unnamed features are large-scale maps and charts published by the Federal and State governments. U.S. Geological Survey topographic maps and National Ocean Service nautical charts, for example, can be found at most large libraries. When considering a proposal to name an unnamed feature, the Board on Geographic Names is guided by the following policies and criteria:

Recommended Kinds of Proposed Names: The U.S. Board on Geographic Names prefers imaginative names that are relatively distinctive provided they are not incompatible with the forms of other names existing in the areas in which they will be used. Names descriptive of topographic form or suggested by local history, folklore, or incident, or by associated natural life or other phenomena are preferred. This includes Native American and other ethnic names appropriate to the area in which the features are located.

Duplication of Names (see Policy VIII: Names Duplication): A proposed name should not duplicate another name in the State or nearby in an adjoining State.

Recommended Name Form: Proposed names are expected to perform useful service as proper names. They normally should be as short as possible and easily pronounced. Preferably, the pronunciation should be apparent from the spelling. Complex and difficult-to-pronounce names often are not accepted by users.

Qualifying Words in Names: Use of qualifying or relational words (middle, upper, north, big, etc.), in the naming of features like lakes, mountains, branches of streams, and canyons, should be avoided where possible. Proposed names should be distinctive.

Generic Terms: When a proposed geographic name includes both a specific and generic element, the generic term (creek, cerro, ridge, lake, col, etc.) must be appropriate to the feature and should normally conform to generic words already used and understood in the area in which the feature is located.

Personal Names (see Policy III: Commemorative Names): A personal name proposed for a geographic feature will not be adopted unless it is determined to be in the public interest to honor the person or family for historical or commemorative reasons. To justify adoption by the Board, the person or family being honored should have been directly associated with the feature being named or have made a significant contribution to the area of the feature or the State in which it is located. Experience shows that local citizens and other name users often resent and even resist using names that commemorate people. Except for very minor features, ownership of land should never in itself be sufficient grounds for honoring a person in a geographic name. Proposals honoring exceptional national or international persons also will be considered.

The following established policies apply to all name proposals in which a personal name is used:

a. The U.S. Board on Geographic Names will not adopt names that commemorate, or may be construed to commemorate, living persons.

b. A person (persons) must have been deceased at least 1 year before a commemorative proposal will be considered.

c. The full name of a person as the specific part of a geographic name normally is not approved. Exceptions are occasionally made when a person's full name, or parts of a full name, are short and euphonious. The Board recommends that a name proposal use a surname or given name alone with an appropriate generic term. The use of a person's epithet, nickname, or title often provides a more interesting and enduring name, which may also be more readily accepted and used by the public because it is less flauntingly commemorative.

Names in Wilderness Areas (see Policy IV: Wilderness Areas): It is the policy of the United States Board on Geographic Names not to approve new names within designated wilderness and proposed wilderness areas unless an overriding need exists, such as for purposes of safety, education, or area administration. The administering Federal agency will review new name proposals and advise the Board of its findings relative to overriding need. Final approval or disapproval will be made by the Board.

Lands Administered by State and Local Jurisdictions: If the feature lies in lands administered by State or local jurisdictions, the name proposal should be coordinated with the responsible local agency (see Principle IV).

Derogatory Names (see Policy VI: Derogatory Names): The U.S. Board on Geographic Names will not adopt a name proposal that implies discrimination or is derogatory to a particular ethnic group, race, or religion. This also applies to names considered obscene or blasphemous in a present-day culture context.

Procedures for Proposing a Name For an Unnamed Feature

A proposed name for an unnamed feature must be approved by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names before it can be used on Federal maps or in other Federal publications. In each case a proposal must be submitted to the Board in writing along with the following information:

a. Full form of geographic name being proposed

b. Location and clear identification of the feature to be named

c. Reason for wishing to name the feature

d. Origin or meaning of the proposed name

e. Basis of knowledge that feature is unnamed

If the proposed name commemorates a person (persons), additional information is needed:

a. Full name of the person (persons)

b. Birth and death dates of the person (persons), if known

c. A short biography of the person to be honored indicating his or her association with the feature or area

A map marked to show the exact delineation of the feature to be named is helpful. Preferably this should be a Federal, State, or county topographic map with appropriate grids and scales for measuring distances and determining precise locations. Board review of a proposal will be expedited if the proposer furnishes some evidence of local support for a proposed name. Such evidence may be in the form of:

a. Letters from appropriate Federal, State, or local administrative authorities and State geographic name authorities

b. Petitions for the name signed by local residents

c. Newspaper clippings of articles and letters to the editor showing public awareness and endorsement of the proposed name

Without such evidence of support, final action on a proposal may take 3 to 6 (or more) months because the Board works closely with State geographic names authorities or committees and with interested Federal and State agencies and local citizens before deciding on a name. A name proposal for a feature on an international boundary may require additional time for processing because the Board will forward the proposal to the appropriate foreign names authority for its endorsement before taking any action. Proposals or inquiries may be directed to:

Executive Secretary
Domestic Geographic Names
U.S. Board on Geographic Names
c/o U.S. Geological Survey
523 National Center
Reston, Virginia 22092
(Tel: 703-648-4506)

Approved by:
Board on Geographic Names
September 8, 1977

Approved by:
Secretary of the Interior
January 21, 1980

THE TREATMENT OF NAMES OF GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES SHARED BY CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES

1. COORDINATION IN THE NAMING OF TRANS-BOUNDARY FEATURES

1.1 Mutual Benefit

WHEREAS: the coordination in the naming of geographical entities on or across the Canada-United States boundary is of mutual benefit to the names authorities in both countries, and to mapping and surveying agencies; and

1.2 Different Names and Different Spellings

WHEREAS: the historical development of the United States and Canada has resulted in several different names or different spellings of the same names for geographical features along their mutual border; it is

1.3 Preservation of Cultural Heritages and Histories

Recommended: that, the different names, and different spellings of the same names, be respected by the appropriate names authorities in each country, in cases where such variances reflect differences in the cultural heritages and historical perspectives of the two countries.

1.4 One Feature - One Name

WHEREAS: it is practical, where culturally acceptable, for a single official name (specific and generic) to be considered for adoption by the Canadian and United States names authorities (provincial, state, federal, where appropriate) for the same entity; it is

1.5 Mutual Effort in the Treatment of Names

Recommended: that similar and effective policies and procedures for handling names of transboundary physical geographical features be established in both countries; and it is

1.6 Cooperative Action

Recommended: that, where a name is proposed for an entity that is unnamed on both sides of the boundary, that name must be submitted to and considered for approval by the appropriate names authorities; if local usage supports the proposal, official adoption of the same name may proceed in both countries.

1.7 Established Name on One Side of the Boundary

Recommended: that, where a geographical entity has an official name on one side of the boundary only, the appropriate names authorities in the other country should consider adoption of the same name, provided it is supported by local usage.

1.8 Joint Adoption of Names, with Unofficial Use on One Side of the Boundary

Recommended: that, where a geographical entity has a name in current but unofficial use on one side of the boundary, the appropriate names authorities in both countries should consider that name for adoption, after local consultation on both sides of the boundary.

1.9 Multiple Names for a Single Feature

Recommended: that, where a geographic entity has a different name in current, but not yet official, use on each side of the boundary, and the appropriate names authorities are unable to agree on a single name, the appropriate authority in each country either (a) may make its own name official, or (b) may decide not to make any name official at that time.

2. NAME CHANGING

2.1 Name-Change Policy WHEREAS: it is highly desirable to retain established official names; it is

Recommended: that, for purpose of conformance to strong local usage or citizen preference, or on special request with strong specific reasons, or mutual standardization, with local agreement a change of an official name may be considered by the appropriate names authorities in both countries.

3. GENERIC AND FEATURE CLASS TERMINOLOGY

3.1 Mutual Understanding WHEREAS: it is desirable for the mutual understanding of geographical terminology in use in each country, and for the facilitation of information exchange, to identify classes of named features, and to have available documentation explaining generic terms and feature classes; it is

3.2 Exchange of Documentation on Terminology Recommended: that the appropriate names authorities in each country prepare and exchange documentation on terminology and generic terms used in their geographical names; and it is

3.3 Automated Geographical Names Data Bases Recommended: that automated geographical names data bases developed by names authorities in each country include appropriate information on generic terms and feature classes, for the purpose of data exchange.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 Agreement on Principles WHEREAS: representatives from the Canadian and United States names authorities have reached agreement on a number of principles for handling boundary name problems

4.2 Agreement on Procedures WHEREAS: procedures as set out in Appendix A are required to implement the principles, it is

4.3 Adoption Recommended: that actions be undertaken to carry out the recommendations.

Approved by:
Canadian Permanent Committee
on Geographical Names
September 23, 1988

Approved by:
U.S. Secretary of the Interior
November 10, 1988

Approved by:
U.S. Board on Geographic Names
April 24, 1987

WATER RIGHTS NAMES

In most Western States, the use of water is based on the law of appropriation. The essence is that a water right is acquired by diverting water from a natural source and applying it to beneficial use. In an attempt to provide a coordinated and integrated selection of rights to a common drainage system, the States have enacted statutory adjudication procedures. The names used for streams, ditches, canals, and reservoirs in adjudicated water rights records assume certain legal status. Generally, no rules apply to the choice of names used for feature reference in the records and, for this reason, some of the names are in conflict with Board on Geographic Names principles and policies.

Guidelines

The principles and policies of the Board on Geographic Names apply to adjudicated water rights names. These names must be approved by the Board before they are used on Federal maps and in other Federal publications. The Board normally will approve adjudicated water rights names that clearly are not in conflict with its principles and policies. For example, a commemorative name will not be considered for approval unless the person or persons for whom the feature is named have been deceased one year, or if the personal name already is used in another nearby or related feature name that is considered official. Water rights names that conflict with clearly established local usage will not be approved.

Procedures

The official reference for geographic names and their application is the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS). Names not in GNIS, or which are not identified as official in GNIS, must be approved by the Board before they can be used in a Federal publication.

ALPHABETIZING AND SEQUENCING RULES FOR GEOGRAPHIC NAMES

The following rules are for alphabetizing and numerical ordering of geographic names in Federal files, listings, and gazetteers. These rules are not for the selection,application, or formatting of any particular geographic name.

Name Format

Before geographic names can be put into alphabetical/numerical order, they must be arranged in data entry format. The majority of geographic names in which the specific term is followed by the generic term are already in data entry format.

Examples: Red River
Big Rock Hollow

1. Names in which a generic term precedes the specific term, however, are listed with the specific term first, followed by a comma, and then the generic term and any associated preposition and/or article.

   Examples: Adams, Mount
   Ann, Lake
   Woods, Lake of the
   Nevada, Sierra
   New Haven, Town of
   Utah, State of

2. **Names of populated places are always listed in reading order.**

   Examples: Lake Placid
   Mount Calvary

3. **Physical-feature names which contain an initial definite article are treated in two different ways, depending on whether they are foreign or domestic names. In foreign physical-feature names and in the names of foreign countries, an initial definite article is reversed only if it is the English word "The." Non-English initial definite articles occurring in foreign physical-feature names are not reversed. In domestic physical-feature names, both English and non-English initial definite articles are reversed.**

   Examples: Capitan, El
   Drain, The
   Mesa, La
   Thoroughfare, The

4. Names containing Arabic numerals are treated two different ways, depending on whether they are foreign or domestic names. In foreign names, all Arabic numerals are spelled out, and if there are any generic terms in initial position, they are reversed. In domestic names, Arabic numerals are not always spelled out, and when not, any initial generic terms are left in reading order.

   Examples: Camp 22
   School Number 14
   Township 33

Alphabetizing Rules

1. Spaces, hyphens, periods, apostrophes, diacritical marks, parentheses, bracketed labels, and underlining are all disregarded.

2. Uppercase and lowercase letters are treated alike.

3. Roman numerals are letters of the alphabet and are treated as such.

4. Names containing both letters and Arabic numerals are treated as follows:

   a. Where the numerals are in initial position within a name, the sequencing is accomplished according to the numerical order of the number after the alphabetical sequencing of other names.

      A
      B
      C
      .
      .
      .
      Z
      1 Branch

2 Creek
23 River
220 Town

b. If a generic term precedes a numeral within a name, the sequencing is accomplished according to the order of the letters in the generic term and then according to the numerical order of the number after the alphabetical sequencing of other names.

Camp Orinoco
Camp Twenty

Camp Yahoo
Camp 22
Camp 44

5. Special letters æ, ȡ, ȝ, ħ, ɪ, ŧ, ŋ, ø, ȣ, œ, ß, ꞩ, ƿ, and ᵫ, which occur only in foreign names, are treated as ae, d, dh, h, i, l, n, o, o, oe, ss, t, th, and u, respectively.

Sequencing Rules

1. Geographic names are sequenced by the alphabetical order of the letters which occur up to a comma, if present, or to the end of the name, if a comma is not present.

2. Names with the same order of letters up to a comma are sequenced by the alphabetical order of the letters following the comma.

3. Names with the same order of letters throughout the name are sequenced by the alphabetical order of the letters comprising the designation code (for foreign names) or the next subordinate level civil division (for domestic names).

4. Names with the same order of letters throughout the name and with the same designation code or next subordinate level civil division are sequenced by the numerical order of the feature's latitude from lowest to highest.

5. Names with the same order of letters throughout the name and with the same designation code or next subordinate level civil division and the same latitude are sequenced by the numerical order of the feature's longitude from lowest to highest.

Chapter 5

EDITORIAL GUIDELINES

WRITING MARKS

Writing marks such as hyphens and apostrophes are occasionally used in domestic geographic names. Usage varies and care should be taken to use the standard form for a particular feature name. Hyphens are sometimes used in names consisting of a phrase (Hole-in-the-Wall, Go-to-it Creek, Be-Cha-Tu-Da Draw) and in names having a dual-form specific (Clark-Mallard Ditch, Alma-Cassville Trail).

Apostrophes suggesting possession or association are not to be used within the body of a proper geographic name (Henrys Fork: not Henry's Fork). The word or words that form a geographic name change their connotative function and together become a single denotative unit. They change from words having specific dictionary meaning to fixed labels used to refer to geographic entities. The need to imply possession or association no longer exists. Thus, we write "Jamestown" instead of "James' town" or even "Richardsons Creek" instead of "Richard's son's creek." The whole name can be made possessive or associative with an apostrophe at the end as in "Rogers Point's rocky shore." Apostrophes also are sometimes used within the body of a geographic name to denote a missing letter (Lake O'the Woods) or when they normally exist in a surname used as part of a geographic name (O'Malley Hollow).

ABBREVIATIONS AND NUMBER NAMES

Names of States can be abbreviated or coded according to Government Printing Office standards. Other geographic names are not abbreviated in sentence context except that "Mount" and "Saint(e)" may be abbreviated as "Mt." and "St(e)." On maps and other illustrations, the generic part of a name and also a few modifiers may be abbreviated ("Middle," "North," "South," "East," "West," "Left," "Right," "Saint" or "Sainte"), but if space is available, it is preferable to spell them out.

Except in a few cases approved by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names, numbers in names should be spelled out. Arabic numerals are number symbols, not words.

Fortynine and One Half Creek
Fourmile Run

CAPITALIZATION OF GEOGRAPHIC NAMES

With some exceptions approved by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names, most words considered part of a proper geographic name are capitalized, including all adjectives, common nouns, and the definite article.

Adams Apple
Alva B. Adams Tunnel
Little Captain Island
Los Canos

Big Hill
Big Hole Basin
Cuchilla Buena Vista
Dark Hollow Brook
Farm River Gut
Lac Arnois
Old Fundamental Church
Pee Dee Ditch
The Crooked Esses
The Hogback
Upper Sulphur Creek
West Side Pond

Exceptions to the rule of capitalization include articles and prepositions within multiple-word names.

Alto de la Cruz
Canada de Ojo del Agua
Fond du Lac
Gap in Knob
Lake of the Ozarks
Posta de Roque
Red River of the North
Rock of Ages
Scarce of Fat Ridge
Spread Eagle Chain of Lakes

As noted earlier, when the generic part of a name is purposely omitted, as in "the Potomac," "the Mojave," and "the Atlantic," the definite article preceding the specific name is not capitalized. Proper names of geographical entities such as regions, political divisions, populated places, localities, and physical features are capitalized in both the singular and plural.

Allegheny Front
Andromeda Cone
Atlantic Coastal Plain
Bighorn Basin
Blue Ridge
Brady Soil
Canal Zone
Central States
Catahoula Parish
Colorado Plateau
Colville Guide Meridian
Continental Divide
Dennison Township
Driftless Area
Eastern Shore
Fall Line
Fall Zone
Far East (Asia)
Front Range
Great Lakes
Gulf Coast
Gulf States
Half Dome
High Plains
Isle of Pines
Lower Town Landing
Middle Atlantic States
Monarch Geyser
Mount Rainier
Niagara Falls
North Atlantic States
North Slope
Pacific Coast States
Pine Ridge Reservation
Potomac and James Rivers
St. Stephens Base Line
Second Principal Meridian
Skyline Drive
The Chute
Tidal Basin
Upper Peninsula
Washington Metropolitan Area
West Coast
Western States

Qualifying words used in a general sense for parts of named areas are not capitalized. Care should be taken to prevent misunderstanding; for example, "western Virginia" or "the western part of Virginia" is preferable to "west Virginia." In borderline cases, however, local residents and news media may consistently use a qualifying word to modify the meaning of an existing geographic name in order to refer to a part of a State or other area. The modifying word then may become part of the proper name, to be uniformly capitalized with the rest of the name.

East Tennessee
Greater New York (City)
North Atlantic (Ocean)
Northern Virginia
South Mississippi
South Pacific (Ocean)
Upstate New York
Southern California

APPENDIX A.--Public Law 242

[PUBLIC LAW 242—80TH CONGRESS]

[CHAPTER 330—1ST SESSION]

[S. 1262]

AN ACT

To provide a central authority for standardizing geographic names for the purpose of eliminating duplication in standardizing such names among the Federal departments, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Secretary of the Interior, hereinafter called the Secretary, conjointly with the Board on Geographic Names, as hereinafter provided, shall provide for uniformity in geographic nomenclature and orthography throughout the Federal Government. The Secretary may exercise his functions through such officials as he may designate, except that such authority as relates to the final approval or review of actions of the Board on Geographic Names shall be exercised by him, or his Under or Assistant Secretaries.

SEC. 2. There is hereby established a Board on Geographic Names, hereinafter called the Board. The membership of the Board shall include one representative from each of the Departments of State, War, Navy, Post Office, Interior, Agriculture, and Commerce, and from the Government Printing Office, and the Library of Congress. The Board may also include representatives from such Federal agencies as the Secretary, upon recommendation of the Board, shall from time to time find desirable, even though these agencies are in the departments otherwise represented on the Board. The members of the Board shall be appointed by the respective heads of the departments or independent agencies that they represent. Each member shall be appointed for a two-year term but may be reappointed to successive terms. The members of the Board shall serve without additional compensation. The Board shall nominate a Chairman to be appointed by the Secretary, and shall establish such working committees as are found desirable.

SEC. 3. The Board, subject to the approval of the Secretary, shall formulate principles, policies, and procedures to be followed with reference to both domestic and foreign geographic names; and shall decide the standard names and their orthography for official use. The principles, policies, and procedures formulated hereunder shall be designed to serve the interests of the Federal Government and the general public to enlist the effective cooperation of the Federal departments and agencies most concerned, and to give full consideration to the specific interests of particular Federal and State agencies. Action may be taken by the Secretary in any matter wherein the Board does not act within a reasonable time. The Board may make such recommendations to the Secretary as it finds appropriate in connection with this Act.

SEC. 4. The Secretary shall cause such studies and investigations to be made and such records to be kept as may be necessary or desirable in carrying out the purposes of this Act, and he shall provide a place of meeting and staff assistance to the Board. The staff shall be responsible to the Secretary, who shall prescribe its relations to the Board and the committees of the Board. The Secretary may establish from time to time, upon recommendation of the Board, advisory committees of United States citizens who are recognized experts in their respective fields to assist in the solution of special problems arising under this Act.

SEC. 5. For the guidance of the Federal Government, the Secretary shall promulgate in the name of the Board, from time to time and in such form as will carry out the purposes of this Act, decisions with respect to geographic names and principles of geographic nomenclature and orthography. The Secretary shall also furnish such additional information with respect to geographic names as will assist in carrying out the purposes of this Act.

SEC. 6. With respect to geographic names the pertinent decisions and principles issued by the Secretary shall be standard for all material published by the Federal Government. The United States Board on Geographical Names in the Department of the Interior created by Executive order, is hereby abolished, and the duties of said Board are transferred to the Board herein created, and all departments, bureaus, and agencies of the Federal Government shall refer all geographic names and problems to the said Board for the purpose of eliminating duplication of work, personnel, and authority.

SEC. 7. Nothing in this Act shall be construed as applying to the naming of the offices or establishments of any Federal agency.

SEC. 8. There are hereby authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of this Act.

Approved July 25, 1947.

APPENDIX B.--Standardization Terms and Definitions

Decision
: Result of an act by means of which a domestic geographic name and its application are made official by the Board on Geographic Names or its Domestic Names Committee after review of case information developed by indepth staff investigation of the name and/or its application.

Decision Description
: Published information given for each domestic geographic name decision that describes the nature and location of the named geographic entity and, in some cases, the origin or meaning of the name.

Domestic Geographic Name
: The proper name of a geographic entity in the United States, its territories and outlying areas.

Geographic Name
: A name applied to a geographic feature. It is the proper name, specific term, or expression by which a particular geographical entity is, or was, known. A geographic entity is any relatively permanent part of the natural or manmade landscape or seascape that has recognizable identity within a particular cultural context. A geographical name, then, may refer to any place, feature, or area on the earth's surface, or to a related group of similar places, features, or areas.

Guideline(s)
: Information provided to assist in understanding a principle, policy, or procedure.

Official Name
: A geographic name, and its written form and application, approved or recognized by the Board for use throughout the Federal Government.

Official Standard Name
: An expression sometimes used to refer to a name established as official by policy, not by decision.

Placename
: Same as Geographic Name.

Policy
: A statement of regulation(s) relating to particular toponymic circumstances; used to guide and determine present and future decisions.

Principle
: A fundamental doctrine that applies to all toponymic conditions that fall under its purview; used to guide and determine present and future decisions.

Procedure(s)
: A set of instructions outlining steps to accomplish a particular goal such as submitting name proposals to the Board on Geographic Names or the application of geographic names to Federal maps and other publications.

APPENDIX B. --Standardization Terms and Definitions-- continued

Revised Decision
Result of an action of the Board on Geographic Names or its Domestic Names Committee to revise the selection, form, or spelling of a former decision.

Revised Description
Result of an action of the Board on Geographic Names or its Domestic Names Committee to revise a former decision description.

Statutory Name
A name made official by an act of Congress.

Toponymy (Toponymic)
The study of or a reference to geographic names.

Unofficial Name
A geographic name not formally recognized as official by the Board on Geographic Names.

Vacated Decision
Result of an action of the Board on Geographic Names or the Domestic Names Committee to formally annul a former decision, such as when the named feature no longer exists or when it cannot be identified.

Variant Name
A name or spelling, once or currently used to refer to a particular geographic entity, other than the official name.

APPENDIX C

FOREIGN GEOGRAPHIC NAMES

FOREIGN NAMES COMMITTEE

Foreign names are handled by the Foreign Names Committee of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names, which is supported by an Executive Secretary and staff furnished by the Defense Mapping Agency, U.S. Department of Defense. The basic policy for determining standard names in foreign countries that use the Roman alphabet is to accept as official the written forms of names recognized locally. Names in countries that do not use the Roman alphabet are converted (romanized) according to systems approved by the Board. The Board cooperates wherever possible with foreign governments to standardize foreign names for official U.S. purposes.

DIACRITICAL MARKS

Some diacritical marks may be essential to the spelling of foreign names. These marks, such as the tilde (cañon), dieresis or umlaut (Korcë, Nürnberg), slash (Røros), macron (Ky▮sh▮), cedilla (Ia▮i), inverted cedilla (D▮browa), grave (Asnières), acute (Orléans), soft sign (Arkhangel'sk), circumflex (Nîmes), superior dot (Skar▮ysko-Kamienna), and others, should be used as specified by the Board on Geographic Names.

CONVENTIONAL NAMES

For names of foreign countries, for features common to two or more countries having different languages, and for a few populated areas and natural features in foreign countries, the Board has also approved optional use of names that are traditional (conventional) with English speaking nations: "Italy (Italia)," "Munich (München)," "Jordan River (Mahr al Urdunn)," "Pyrenees (Pirineos, Pyrénées)."

FOREIGN GAZETTEERS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS

The official standard forms of foreign names have been published by the Board in more than 170 gazetteers. Copies are on file at the Geological Survey libraries in Reston, Virginia; Denver, Colorado; and Menlo Park, California, and also in more than 600 Federal, State, university, and local libraries. Among other publications are a "Romanization Guide," "Foreign Names Decisions of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names," and a "Conventional Names Gazetteer." Requests for these items and inquiries concerning foreign place names, including those of underseas areas and Antarctica, should be addressed to: Executive Secretary, Foreign Geographic Names, U.S. Board on Geographic Names, Defense Mapping Agency, U.S. Naval Observatory, Building 56, Washington, DC 20305.

APPENDIX D

UNITED NATIONS: INTERNATIONAL STANDARDIZATION

HISTORY OF INTERNATIONAL STANDARDIZATION

Expansion of international activities in the 19th century was accompanied by a growing realization that various forms of communication and documentation relied on standard geographic references for accuracy. Geographical names had to be continually printed, copied, telegraphed, and written on maps and charts. Languages of the world, however, are recorded in different scripts. The number of speech sounds, and the number of ways of uttering and modifying them, is so large that no language contains them all, no person can use them all, and no traditional system of writing can represent them all.

The First International Geographical Congress held in Antwerp in 1871 was the springboard for an effort to achieve worldwide uniformity in geographic names. This was followed in 1875 by the Universal Postal Union's decision to adopt the Roman alphabet for writing post office names. In 1909, the International Map Committee set the standard for name usage to be applied on the International Map of the World series.

UNITED NATIONS EFFORTS

Current efforts to standardize geographical names for international use are mainly associated with the work of the United Nations. That organization was, and is, considered by most to be the logical place to coordinate and encourage international name standardization. In 1959, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations passed a resolution requesting the Secretary General to draft a plan for achieving international uniformity. United Nations' activities include sponsoring conferences and sessions of a group of experts in the interest of developing guiding principles for attaining uniformity in the name processing procedures and in the promotion of national standardization by all countries.

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